



LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

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Witnessing to the call!

Dear Lay Mennaisians, Dear Brothers,

Throughout the history of the spiritual life, those who are called by the Lord are, so to speak, urged to bear witness. Yesterday it was the apostles, the martyrs and the saints. But even today, there is no lack of witnesses. Will we be able to recognise them and listen to them?

Thus, four members of the Mennaisian Family: two lay people and two Brothers - will share with us what nourishes their vocation. The strength of their witness comes from the fact that, as Karl Jaspers said, "*the witness does not force anyone*", but is a light for those who welcome him or her as a companion on their journey.

With joy, kindness and tenderness



My name is Stéphane Le Pape, I am French and have been a Brother of Ploërmel for 36 years, including 25 years of mission abroad, first in Togo and then in Indonesia since the year 2000. I am master of novices in Yogyakarta on the island of Java.

The more I advance in life, the more I am convinced of two essential aspects of my witness: joy and above all kindness. Smiling, being available, listening - not to automatically answer! Being humble and hard-working are the attitudes I try to develop. With my brothers first of all, by taking part in the life of the neighbourhood, of the base community and in relation to the formators of other congregations too. For me, being a Brother means being joyful and good in my relationships. "The Brother seeks to make his witness perceptible... He achieves this above all through the *quality of his human relationships and the joy* he radiates in the service of God and of people" (D 109).

In the Gospels, St Joseph appears to me as a strong and courageous figure, a worker. But in his heart, I witness an extraordinary tenderness, which is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength of soul and the ability to show compassionate concern. Following him, I feel called to sincerely open my heart to others and to love. I must not be afraid to be a good person, to be a gentle person like him!

My identity and mission as a Brother is to witness to the love of Christ (John 13:14-15) so that the world may be one and believe (John 17:21). My daily commitment consists in being the face of Jesus-Brother *here and now*. My witness is therefore essentially nourished by my personal relationship with Jesus, the founder of a new form of brotherhood through his teaching and his life. Fraternity is a gift that I receive

from Jesus and that I am called to share by trying to be joyful and good like Him, like Mary, Joseph, our founders and many others.

Through self-giving and selfless service



My name is Guillermo González Escobar and I am Chilean.

More than 33 years of Mennaisian presence in Llay-Llay (Chile) and as many years as a Lay Mennaisian have allowed me to get to know the Brothers by participating in meetings and retreats, sharing the charism inherited from Jean-Marie de la Mennais.

My Mennaisian vocational commitment came about in a natural way through daily contact with the Brothers in their work, their giving and their witness.

A good part of this vocational commitment comes from the community encounter in prayer, shared work and accompaniment between Brothers and Lay people in the Mennaisian Family.

At this time of pandemic, getting to know the members of the Mennaisian Family in other countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay and Mexico, strengthens my professional commitment. What enthusiasm in the Mennaisian experience!

Seeing the way in which these people commit themselves in their countries to the neediest, with the same look and the same gesture that Jean-Marie de la Mennais had in his native land, allowing me to see the face of solidarity of Jesus, pushes me to continue on this path that I have travelled for so many years. It only remains for me to say thank you to the Brothers and Lay people for their gift and their sense of selfless service and for letting me grow as a person. This allows me to strengthen my vocation and to continue to be part of this great Family.



With a look that lifts and a creativity that gives wings



My name is Claire Lehugeur. I am French. I am involved with "La Mennais Jeunesse" which coordinates actions with young people in France and I am Vice-President of the Estival Association which manages holiday stays and develops socio-educational projects.

My vocation as a lay person within the Mennaisian Family was born through contact with the Brothers and lay people at the Mennaisian summer camps at Estival. As a participant, I experienced intense moments of joy. I realized that I had a place, a voice and that my life had value. Inspired by strong adults, I became a mentor myself. I learned to look at young people in an uplifting way and I tasted the joy of being together and the desire to make the world more beautiful through education. When I was given responsibilities, I blossomed in the possibility of being daring with others and always at the service of young people. It is not by chance that I became a school teacher. However, it is still through contact with other young and not so young Mennaisians that my vocation is nourished. On the one hand, by the quality of the relationships, the times of exchange, of rereading and sharing. On the other hand, by the possibility of acting, of making mistakes sometimes, but of proposing new projects that always reach those who need them. In the Estival Association, there is a flexibility in the structure and a little "*everything is possible*" side that gives wings. I have found it very fulfilling to allow those who want to get involved, to be empowered, to grow by helping others to grow. Seeing young people become aware of the impact they can have on the world, getting involved and coming up with new ideas gives me great joy. Being creative in helping young people become strong, grounded adults is my way of witnessing to my vocation as a Mennaisian lay person.

Let us pray:

Teach us, Lord, to choose you every day, to say your "yes" again in each of our actions. Give us the grace to follow you without fear, and to love you more than anything else. Make us witnesses before all of you of what we have seen and heard, of what we believe and live, so that everyone with us may recognise in you the only Lord! Amen!

Through the quality of presence and relationships



My name is Brother Julius Mandella and I am Ugandan. I have five years of religious life.

My vocation is a special call, a grace and a gift from God. I am called to be holy, to serve God through the education of children and young people, especially the poorest. I live my consecrated life in joy, in community with my brothers. Faith lived in the small details of daily life educates me to abandon myself to Providence and helps me to witness to the beauty and simplicity of my vocation as a Mennaisian Brother. My relationship with the Lord is nourished by community prayer, daily prayer, the review of my life and the filial love of the Virgin Mary.

Living with young people is my passion! Helping them to better know and love Jesus Christ fills me with happiness and joy. For example, during my apostolate at Pandahill Secondary School, a school belonging to the Archdiocese of Mbeya-Tanzania and run by the Brothers, apart from computer and catechism classes, I spent many hours in the company of young people. Thus, my presence expressed my desire to help them grow and flourish.

At present, I live in the Novitiate community and I also teach in a nearby school. The fraternal relationships that I try to develop with the young people, the novices, the Brothers of my community and the lay collaborators teach me to walk with the other and educate me in patience. There is more joy in giving than in receiving. How beautiful it is to give one's life to God alone for the service of children and young people!



**Brother Hervé Zamor,
Superior General**